

MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS

SANDPLAIN BLUE-EYED GRASS

(Sisyrinchium arenicola Bickn.)

DESCRIPTION

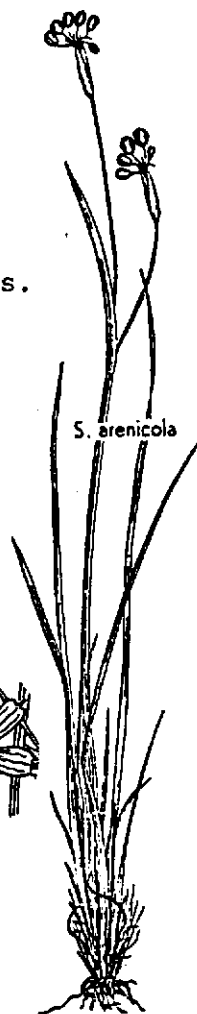
Sandplain Blue-eyed Grass is a low, often tufted, light green perennial herb, 4-20 inches (10-50 cm.) in height with short rootstalks. Leaves are stiff, narrow, and grass-like, less than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (1-3.5 mm.) wide. Erect stems bear two to eight slender flower stalks, each stalk an inch to $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. Flowers are blue with yellow centers. Flowers typically bloom in June-July yet some individuals may flower through August. The fruits are dark brown capsules.

SIMILAR SPECIES

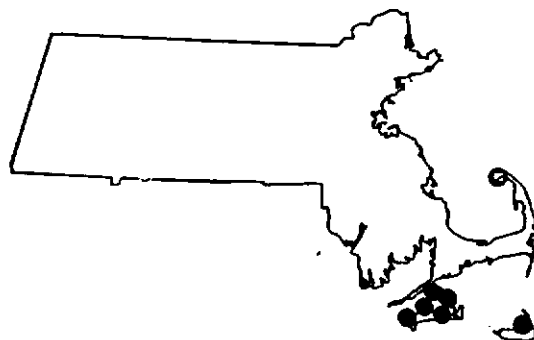
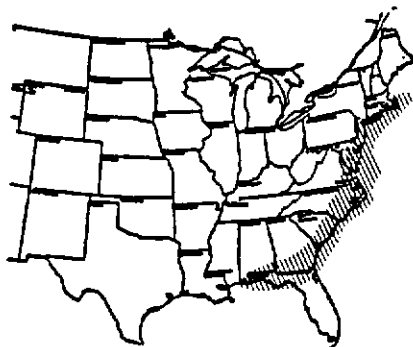
Two other species of Blue-eyed Grass may occur in dry habitats, but seldom in the very dry sandplains inhabited by S. arenicola. Stout Blue-eyed Grass (S. angustifolium or S. bermudiana) has stems and leaves which are 3-5mm wide. Atlantic Blue-eyed Grass (S. atlanticum) is very similar to S. Arenicola but arenicola can best be told from atlanticum and other Blue-eyed grasses by the presence of numerous dark brown bristles at the base of the plant. These bristles represent the remains of dried leaf bases and may require pulling up a plant to see well.

HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Sandplain Blue-eyed Grass occurs in loose colonies or as scattered individuals in dry, open, sandy fields near the coast. Associated species include Andropogon scoparius (Little Bluestem), Aster concolor (Eastern Silvery Aster), Helianthemum dumosum (Bushy Rockrose), Linum intercursum (Sandplain Flax) and Amelanchier nantucketensis (Nantucket Shadbush).



Gleason, M.A. The New Britton and Brown
Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern U.S.
and Adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden,
1952.



- Verified since 1978
- Reported prior to 1978

Distribution of Sandplain Blue-eyed Grass Distribution in Massachusetts by Town

SANDPLAIN BLUE-EYED GRASS (continued)

RANGE

S. arenicola ranges along the coast from southeastern Massachusetts to Florida and west to Alabama.

POPULATION STATUS

In Massachusetts, Sandplain Blue-eyed Grass is considered a species of "Special Concern". Twenty-eight current occurrences (1978 to present) and eight historical occurrences have been recorded. Reasons for this species' relative rarity include loss of habitat, its location in Massachusetts at the northern edge of its range, and overgrowth of shrubs in its habitat due to suppression of fire and cessation of grazing.